

# Heapey and Wheelton Parish Plan 2006

Below is the complete Parish Plan for Heapey and Wheelton including the Action Plan. A summary of the following document was sent to all households in Heapey and Wheelton in January 2006.

## **FOREWORD by Her Worship the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Marie Gray**

I am proud to have been asked to write the foreword to the Heapey and Wheelton Parish Plan.

With sponsorship from the Countryside Agency and the determination to go ahead, we now see in print the result of much hard work. Heapey and Wheelton Parish Councils working together, as they do so often, set up an independent Steering Group, who then carried out all consultations and research needed to prepare the Plan. The result of their dedicated work is a document to be proud of, and one that will be referred to when decisions about the two villages are made in the future.

I would like to say "Thank you", on behalf of all residents of Heapey and Wheelton to everyone involved in the preparation of the Parish Plan, from residents who responded to questionnaires or attended meetings, right through to the Steering Group who have completed their task so well! I congratulate you all on a job well done, but as we all know, plans are only a start! The work must now begin to put the Parish Plan into action.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **General Introduction**

The Parishes of Heapey and Wheelton enjoy a unique location, sitting snug between the Lancashire town of Chorley, a bustling market town, and the adjacent rugged and attractive hills of the West Pennine Moors.

In historic terms, the area owes much to a mix of traditional farming and its relatively recent industrial heritage much of which has already been confined to history in the form of Victoria Mill, Heapey Bleach works and the Chorley to Blackburn railway line. Each element, in its own way, has made its mark and each has added an additional dimension to the diversity of the resident population through time. Equally, and of probably greater significance in terms of recent history, the M61 motorway has played its part in prescribing the nature of village life in this twenty first century. It has to be said that village life has probably, at no point in its previous history, owed so little to its immediate physical environment. In real terms, the villages of Heapey and Wheelton share a modern inheritance now, that of the dormitory settlement. As dormitory settlements the risk is that the villages become little more than a staging point in the rush that is modern life in the twenty first century.

What is it then that makes the Parishes of Heapey and Wheelton and those that enjoying living, working and learning in our villages so much more than this modern inheritance suggests? In part, it is the purpose of this plan to identify those things that make our villages special, to protect what is good and to remedy those parts identified as not quite so good. A deep satisfaction in what we have should not and cannot be viewed as complacency, for in that complacency might grow the seeds of change capable of upsetting the fine state of balance between town and country, old and new, good and bad.

## **Parish Profile**

In terms of make up, the parishes of Heapey and Wheelton cover an area of approximately 3,060 acres, contain 782 households and have a population, according to the last census (2001), of some 1,956 people. The two parishes lie to the east of the M61 motorway. This provides what is basically a physical divide between the urban area of the Borough of Chorley and the rural settlements in the east of the Borough, which link Chorley with the outlying areas of the surrounding towns of Blackburn, Bolton and Preston. To the south and east lie the West Pennine Moors and Healey Nab, with the Leeds Liverpool canal to the north. The A674, Chorley to Blackburn road, passes through both parishes.

There are 4 main settlements in the parishes, Higher Wheelton, Wheelton, White Coppice and Heapey Chase Estate. Higher Wheelton lies within Wheelton Parish and is basically ribbon development along the A674. It has a general store / newsagent, garage and a pub, the Golden Lion. There is a mixture of properties, some very old in the row next to the Golden Lion and opposite Jenny Lane and much newer houses in Lawton Close and Bett Lane.

The geographical village of Wheelton straddles the 2 parishes, Kenyon Brook being the common boundary. The houses consist of old terraced properties, built to house the mill workers; a more recent development, Millbrook Close, on the site of Victoria Mill; sheltered bungalows and older semi-detached / terraced properties on Blackburn Road and Kenyon Lane. The local war memorial, the Clock Tower, is situated at the heart of the village, which has a post office, garage, fish and chip shop, launderette, general store / off licence, hairdresser, photographic studio, soft furnishing boutique and no less than 4 pubs within the settlement. In contrast, White Coppice and Heapey Chase have no shops or pubs in the vicinity. Both of them lie within Heapey Parish but are completely different from each other. White Coppice is a rural hamlet and a conservation area with only 16 properties, whilst Heapey Chase is a large residential estate of detached and semi-detached houses built in the 1990s.

Because the 2 parishes share a common boundary and Wheelton village straddles the boundary, the parish councils took the view that the plan should be a joint Heapey and Wheelton Parish Plan.

## **What is a Parish Plan?**

In an effort to give small rural communities a bigger opportunity to run their own affairs and to shape their future, the Countryside Agency, as part of its Vital Villages initiative, has encouraged such communities to produce a Parish Plan. In order to facilitate the production of a plan the Countryside Agency has made grants of up to £5,000 available.

A Parish Plan is a document setting out the concerns and issues raised by the people of the parish and suggests way in which these can be addressed. It is intended to set out a vision for how the community wants to develop and identify the action needed to achieve it. It can include everything that is relevant to the people who live and work in the community, from employment and playgrounds to the design of new buildings and protection of hedges and ponds.

## **Why should we have a Parish Plan?**

Because the plan sets out what the people of the area would like to see take place, it will help the parish councils decide where and how to spend their share of the council tax. It will also provide information, which can be used to influence the policies of Chorley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council, in order to address the issues raised and enhance the parishes' economic, social and environmental well-being.

## **HOW THE PLAN WAS PRODUCED**

In the spring of 2004, the two parish councils invited any resident, who was interested, to join a steering group to oversee the production of the parish plan. The group initially organized volunteers to take photographs of any subject they thought important in the two parishes. This information was then used to develop a number of theme areas for consideration through the plan process. Next, five launch events were organized during the summer of 2004. They were held at Higher Wheelton, Wheelton, White Coppice, Heapey Chase and the village fete. At the events, members of the public were invited to comment on any aspect of life within the parishes and from those comments the main issues, which concerned the community, were more formally identified. These were sport and recreation, highways and traffic, business, environment and housing.

In order to engage all members of the community, an exercise entitled Village Views was carried out. This, initially, took the form of a questionnaire, which sought more details on the above topics. These were delivered to every household in the 2 parishes in May 2005 and all members of the household, over the age of 11, were invited to express their views. Out of the 782 households, which received a questionnaire, 50% returned a completed form. The responses were analysed and each topic was examined by a different small group from within the steering group. Their findings and recommendations are printed in the following sections.

In addition to the questionnaire, several groups of people were consulted. Young people were invited to an event at the Village Hall hosted by South Lancashire Arts Partnership and children from St Chad's RC Primary School had their say. Members of the steering group attended a meeting of the residents of the sheltered accommodation and members of the business community attended an event hosted by the Red Cat, at which Chorley Borough Council was represented.

## **ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **The Issues: Business Sector**

The Village Views exercise recognized business as one of the characteristic elements of life in the area. In many ways, the process of identifying those businesses evident on the street scene barely scratches the surface in terms of the size and composition of the local business community in the parishes of Heapey and Wheelton.

The questionnaire developed for the Parish Plan added only a small amount of understanding to local views in the area about the business community. Almost 40% of respondents to the questionnaire indicated support for the creation of more local jobs with a further 27.5% expressing no strong opinion on the matter. At the same time strong feelings were expressed in terms of how such jobs could or should be accommodated locally. Over 60% of respondents indicated they did not wish to see the creation of small scale industrial workshops with almost 40% responding in an equally negative way to a more general question referring to small business development in Heapey and Wheelton.

In general terms the questionnaire identified the fact that, of those completing questionnaires, almost 86% considered none of the potential barriers to work, training or study opportunities, as presented in the questionnaire, to be of significance.

In an effort to add further to the small amount of evidence on the business community, gathered through the early stages of the process and the residents questionnaire, a further event was organized locally for the business community.

In September 2005, a Business Breakfast Briefing took place with the aim of both informing the local business community about the parish plan process but more significantly, with the purpose of better engaging with businesses in attempting to identify what matters to businesses in the local area. Whilst not particularly evident in the area, the parishes of Heapey and Wheelton are host to approximately 60 local businesses covering a wide range of activities from doorstep milk delivery to physiotherapy. Supported by officers from Chorley Borough Council's policy and economic development office, together with representatives from Central and West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, the Breakfast Business Briefing event attracted only a small number of participants but encouraged some interesting discussion and the identification of some opportunities to enhance business development.

### **Recommendations: Business Sector**

- That the provision of a local area map be considered and that this be mounted at appropriate points within the two parishes identifying local points of interest and also containing information on local businesses. Provision would be made on the basis of sponsorship from the businesses featured on the map.
- That future use of the sand quarry includes provision for additional parking as a means of enhancing the facility and in order to encourage more visitors to the area and all visitors to stay longer.
- That consideration is given to increasing commercial use of the village hall in Wheelton.
- That a local business club be encouraged and as far as possible supported to maximize any potential benefits to both the businesses themselves and the local area more generally.

## **The Issues: Housing**

The Parishes of Heapey and Wheelton share an extremely wide mix of residential property ranging from the smallest of old stone cottages to the most modern of new and refurbished accommodation. Indeed in many respects it is the very nature of this mix that contributes so much to the overall appearance of the area.

Housing and the availability of homes serving the needs of both a growing indigenous population and to a lesser extent, the growing pressure from the general population to find a place in the country to live, was an inevitable feature of the village views process and consequently the residents questionnaire.

In the questionnaire survey we asked residents for their views on a number of issues relating to housing and the following results were forthcoming. Quite surprisingly only a small number of residents reported that members of their household or indeed the whole family were seeking alternative accommodation, just over 4.4% in total. Cost and a lack of suitable housing were the main reasons reported as presenting the difficulty for those households/individuals unable to move. The majority of this group were looking for owner occupied property and only a very small number were seeking accommodation in the rented sector.

When the questions on housing focused more specifically on the supply side, 50% of residents in the survey thought the amount of new build was about right. This contrasts with just 11% of respondents suggesting that too much new housing had been built in the past 10 years and just 5% suggesting that too few new homes had been built.

In looking to the future the views of existing residents were unanimous with 88% of respondents stating that in their view no further housing should be built in the local area. When the question became a little more specific and on the basis of attempting to identify where specific needs might be evident and be accommodated, again over 70% of respondents stated that it was their view that no further homes were needed.

When questioned on the type of accommodation respondents thought would be acceptable in their own area, limited support was shown for the provision of affordable homes, homes for young people and small family homes. Its fair to say this group probably represented the majority of the limited local growth requirement.

Getting into a little more detail on the type of new residential accommodation that might be viewed as acceptable for the area as a whole, again the overwhelming majority of respondents (46%) thought no new housing development should take place in Heapey and Wheelton. Approximately half thought the conversion of redundant buildings was acceptable, around 20% thought that single dwellings were acceptable in controlled locations, 11% of respondents thought small developments of less than 10 homes might be acceptable.

From the questionnaire process the overwhelming view was that the amount of new homes built within the Parishes of Heapey and Wheelton needed to be carefully controlled. On the basis of demand from local growth there is little evidence to suggest significant latent demand for new homes. At the same time it has to be accepted that this conclusion could be a direct result of the current make up of the area with few respondents from the 18 – 24 age group likely to be considering setting up home on their own for the first time.

## **Recommendations: Housing**

- That the ongoing review of the current local development plan through the Local Development Framework process takes note of the findings of the Parish Plan survey.
- That, in the light of the findings of the Parish Plan survey, the current allocation(s) for housing are reviewed and properly reflect local views / needs on this issue.
- That the conversion of existing buildings within the Parishes of Heapey and Wheelton be viewed positively and where appropriate such developments are encouraged as a mechanism for meeting an element of local demand whether arising from indigenous or inward growth pressure.

## **The Issues: Roads, Traffic and Transport**

Traffic was identified as a significant issue for both Heapey and Wheelton when the Village Views events were held. The questionnaires confirm that the increase in traffic in all parts of our two Parishes is of considerable concern.

The car, used by 87.4% of respondents, was identified as the major means of transport whilst 6.5% of respondents use the bus to get to work and 20% use the bus occasionally for shopping and social events. Responses suggest that bus services are reasonable for timetable, route and reliability. People are less happy with the cost of fares. The responses might now be different following changes to the bus timetable since the survey.

Of respondents to Q33, which concerned traffic danger spots, 83% agreed that these existed in their part of Heapey and Wheelton.

Question 34 asked whether there would be support to take action to improve road safety in a number of specific locations. The responses identify the A674 Blackburn Road as the main focus of pleas for speed reduction and improvement schemes. The many junctions with Blackburn Road are all identified as difficult or dangerous by both pedestrians and drivers, specifically those at Botany and Knowley for the Heapey Chase and White Coppice residents; Chapel Lane (65.6%) and Victoria Street (57.9%) for Heapey, Wheelton and White Coppice residents, and those in Higher Wheelton (53.3%), where it bisects the village, for the residents in that area.

Generally, 38.7% of respondents would like to see traffic calming measures introduced. Those making this suggestion include people living on our rural lanes as well as village streets. There is specific support for traffic calming, to enforce the existing speed limits, on Kenyon Lane and Blackburn Road down to the Red Lion, Heapey; Victoria Street, Wheelton; through Higher Wheelton and on Heapey Road, in the vicinity of the entrance to Heapey Chase Estate.

There is some support (37.2%) for parking control in the questionnaires with Kenyon Lane and Victoria Street, especially at the junction with the A674, being mentioned as areas of specific concern. However, 73.4% of respondents say “no” to car parks.

The majority of respondents, 74%, park their vehicles off the road or in a garage. Only 10% of respondents often have problems parking in their parish.

Facilities for pedestrians in Heapey and Wheelton are considered good or reasonable by 75% of respondents.

The A674, Millennium Way, / Blackburn Old Road / Moss Lane junction, close to Next Generation Club, is used by most residents of the parishes whatever their mode of transport. This junction is specifically identified, by many respondents, as a major cause for concern.

### **Recommendations: Roads, Traffic and Transport.**

- Improve junctions on A674 by providing speed reduction measures and features to assist pedestrians, thereby reducing the risk to all road users.
- Investigate reduction of speed limits, with traffic calming measures where appropriate, on village streets and rural lanes, particularly Kenyon Lane; Victoria Street; Blackburn Road, Heapey; Chapel Lane and Heapey Road, in the vicinity of Heapey Chase.

- Enforce existing speed limit on Blackburn Road, Higher Wheelton.
- Look at ways of monitoring and managing parking along Kenyon Lane and Victoria Street to encourage safer driving conditions.

### **The Issues:Environment**

Issues that affect the environment through individual lifestyles were very evident amongst Parish residents. These included recycling, composting and energy saving. Whilst these are personal choices, it is important for the Parish Councils to encourage actions to reduce individual environmental impacts. Proposals on how to improve the Parish environment varied. Many identified dog fouling as a key anti - social behaviour issue. The provision of bridleways to provide safe off-road riding and reduce horse deposits on pedestrian routes and roads was also a key issue.

The quality of the countryside around the parishes was considered as being important by 99% of residents. All the landscape features around the parishes were identified by over 75% of the residents as requiring some form of protection. These include the management of woodlands, protection and maintenance of hedgerows and the repair and maintenance of dry-stone walls (88%). The Leeds - Liverpool canal was narrowly identified as the most important landscape feature (89%).

One of the greatest concerns raised by respondents was the aesthetic appearance of the area. Litter, fly tipping, dog fouling, horse fouling and damage to grass verges were seen as detracting from the beauty of the area. This was particularly evident (84%) for routes through the parishes. There was a strong desire to prevent vehicular damage to grass verges, maintain these verges in an environmentally sound manner and to care for the canal and railway embankments.

The proximity of the parishes to built-up areas and their landscape features were considered important for recreation. It was identified that improvements could be made to the roads, pavements, footpaths and bridleways around the parishes. Consideration should also be given to providing access for people with disabilities.

The provision of special open spaces was considered as important by 73% of respondents. Four potential sites were clearly identified of which the Old Sand Quarry at Kenyon Lane was clearly the most popular.

### **Recommendations: Environment**

- Every resident has an individual responsibility for looking after the environment. With this, the parish councils should assist residents to make an educated choice in their lifestyle through awareness raising and encouragement of local action by local residents.
- Many of the issues raised concerned the aesthetic appearance of the parishes and villages. The parish councils should give consideration to the employment of a person to carry out litter picking and general tidying duties through the parish lengthsman scheme.
- The protection of the Green Belt and maintenance of local landscape features were seen as important. The parish councils should work in partnership with local authorities and relevant agencies to promote the positive management of these features and to enforce relevant protection, legislation and regulations.



## **The Issues: Children and Young People**

A number of methods were used to obtain the views of children and young people. Children came to the Village Views events, contributed to the information gathered at the Village Fete and also attended a special children's event run by South Lancs Arts Partnership (SLAP) with Steering Group Members. Children at a local school, St Chad's, were canvassed and the views of 21 children, who live in the Heapey and Wheelton Parishes, were obtained.

Overall the primary school aged children seem to reflect their parents' views. They are happy with their villages especially their rural nature, generally quieter roads, trees and countryside, the canal and nice views.

The older age group 11-15 years and 16-18 years responded in the same way in the survey, identifying the environment and the situation as the things they liked most about their parish.

Younger children don't like teenagers "hanging around", though many said they probably had nowhere to go. Many also commented on the lack of safe cycling space other than the canal towpath. Again older children also felt that cycling facilities were poor.

Of all the respondents to the survey 45% felt the playground facilities are reasonable with 29% feeling they are poor.

The children seem to feel the same. We asked our groups what they thought of the play areas. They felt the park in Wheelton was for young children, a bit babyish. They would like more of an adventure style playground with climbing frames and more facilities.

The young people have also indicated they would like more to do. The play survey identified a youth club as being desirable and also football and sports facilities as being needed.

The overall feeling, however, seems to be to leave things as they are. Like the adults the young people want the future to be managed and monitored to improve facilities and maintain the special rural characteristics of Heapey and Wheelton.

The majority of children and young people who attended our events and responded to the questionnaire feel the rural environment of Heapey and Wheelton is very important.

## **Recommendations: Children and Young People**

- Improve the play areas and design them for a wider range of young people.
- Provide a youth club in the village hall
- Improve cycling facilities in the Parishes.

## **The Issues: Sport, Recreation and Leisure**

The views of all respondents correlate very highly across Heapey and Wheelton, with 76% of Heapey respondents answering positively for open spaces for sport and recreation. Similarly, 70% of Wheelton responses reflect the same desire.

Almost identical responses and suggestions again came from the two parishes in identifying the “old Sand Quarry” (Cophurst Lane / Kenyon Lane) as the prime site for development for sport etc. Overall 49% of respondents identified the quarry as the most favoured site (responses: Heapey 50%, Wheelton 48%) with football and other team sports coming top of the list as identified priorities. This desire for facilities is reflected in the section “Children and Young People”.

The next favoured area for development in the context of sport and recreation is the field used once a year for the village fete at Black Lion farm. Overall 11% thought this site should be developed with sporting facilities etc. (responses: Heapey 10%, Wheelton 12%).

The third priority identified area for development is the Village Hall itself, with its adjacent land and the play area at Meadow Street – 4% of respondents identified this priority especially better facilities at the Village Hall.

Minority responses included greater access to the West Pennine Moors, development of play facilities at Kittiwake Road, Heapey, cycle ways etc.

## **Recommendations: Sport, Recreation and Leisure**

- Acquire and develop the “old Sand Quarry” for Sport and Recreation
- Further develop and improve facilities at the Village Hall

## **THE FUTURE**

The recommendations in this plan have been produced as a result of extensive consultations with the residents and wider stake holder groups of Heapey and Wheelton and represent a summary of the way in which they feel the villages should develop and be managed in the future.

Parish Councils are the bottom tier of local government and, as such, represent “grass roots” opinion. The Parish Plan provides the two parish councils with views on which to base their policies and decisions in order to attain the hopes and aspirations of the people they represent. The Action Plan, which follows, sets out ways of achieving this aim.

The work of the Steering Group is now complete and it is time for the Parish Plan Action Group to take over. The group in partnership with the parish councils will push forward the plan and monitor its progress.

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### **The Steering Group**

Keith Molloy (Chairman), Lawrence Kelly, Joan Geddes, Bill Geddes, Terry Dickenson, Sandy Mohamet, Kim Wisdom, Ronnie Wheale, Sue Monaghan, Sharuna Reddy, Ed Downs, John Whitehead

### **Not forgetting....**

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